

AMENDMENTS

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please add the following paragraph after Paragraph 43 in the specification:

The pH of the clay slurry can be adjusted to a desired level. In some embodiments, the pH is adjusted to above 5.5. In other embodiments, the pH is adjusted to between 6 and 11. Preferably, the pH is adjusted by adding HCl, H₃PO₄, H₂SO₄, or CH₃COOH.